

# The Rag Doll's Christmas

HERE was once a very, very old rag doll who lived in a nursery. She was so old that she had seen all the children grow up—the boy who wore trousers now, the girl who had her hair done in braids, the middle-sized child who had so often left the rag doll out in the garden at night. There was only the baby left—bless his pink toes!

But the rag doll was very, very old, and one beautiful Christmas time she began to show her age.

Her hair had been combed so much that it had come out dreadfully, and her nose, from a great deal of kissing, was entirely gone. Her pretty pink cheeks had been washed away when the boy tried to teach her to swim in the bath tub, and all her clothes were very untidy indeed.

The baby never noticed all these things, but the toys did; they all made the most unkind remarks to the rag doll the day before Christmas.

"Look at your dirty face," said the large French doll. "You'll be put in the attic tonight. That's where the old dolls go." "Look at your dress," said the jumping jack. "It is all torn. I wouldn't walk across the nursery floor with you."

"Did you ever see such thin hair?" asked the hobby horse. "I thought my tail was thin, but it isn't to be compared with that!"

But just then the nursery door opened, and the Christmas Angel came in. You could be perfectly sure that it was the Christmas Angel even if she did have on a gingham apron, because her face shone so, through the dark.

"The French doll must go up to the attic," said the Christmas Angel. "There is a more beautiful new best doll coming."

"Why, the Jack-in-the-box has forgotten how to jump."

You see the Jack-in-the-box had been so excited about the rag doll's dress that he had broken his spring.

"The Jack-in-the-box must go up to the attic, too," said the Christmas Angel.

Then she went over to the hobby-horse.

"Poor, old hobby-horse!" she said. "Your leg is very badly broken. I will take you up to the attic until you can be mended."

"There," the Christmas Angel said at last, "the nursery is all tidy, and ready for new toys—but, dear me, what's this? Why, it is the little rag doll!"

"Oh, please, do I have to go to the attic, too?" said the rag doll. "It's very cold there, and I know the best doll will have the chimney corner for herself—and I don't want the mice to gnaw my toes!"

"Why, you dear old thing!" said the Christmas Angel. "You're the same rag doll that I used to play with when I was little. You go to the attic? Why, I just guess not! We couldn't get along without you in the nursery. You do need a little mending, but I am going to sew you, and then you shall sit on the very tiptop of the Christmas tree."

The Christmas Angel lighted one of the Christmas candles so that she could see to sew. Then she took the rag doll in her lap and opened her workbag and set to work.

First she stuffed the rag doll's insides with plenty of cotton so she could sit up. Then she sewed her toes and put new little white stockings and black shoes on her feet. She took a piece of clean, white cloth and covered the rag doll's dirty face, and painted in blue eyes and a smiling red mouth and vermilion cheeks. She sewed on a new yellow wig; and then she made a pink - and - white checked gingham dress with puffed sleeves, and a white apron with strings to keep the dress clean, and a pink - and - white checked sunbonnet to tie under the rag doll's chin and keep her hair tidy.

"I think you will do now, you dear old thing," said the Christmas Angel. So it came Christmas morning, and there on the tiptop of the tree sat the rag doll quite made over. The children thought her really the most beautiful of all the Christmas things. As for the rag doll herself—why, all the pleasure of her old days was as nothing to the happiness that was hers now.—Carolyn S. Bailey, in Kindergarten Review.



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AN AMUSING story of how Santa Claus frightened the black children at a mission station when he first appeared to them a few years ago, is told by the wife of a missionary stationed at Ballunda, Africa. They had celebrated Christmas at Ballunda before, but they never had had Santa Claus; so Mr. Stover, the missionary, dressed up as good Saint Nick.

"He had been padded and powdered and packed until his own mother would not have known him," Mrs. Stover afterward related. "Presently we gave the signal, the door flew open and in walked Santa Claus. But, dear me! What consternation! He was greeted with shrieks and groans and cries of 'Let me out! It is the evil one. It is the day of judgment!'"

"The urchins, catching the infection of terror from the older black people, fled to their bedrooms, fell down upon their faces, crept under chairs and tables—anywhere to hide themselves. Poor old Santa Claus never had such a greeting before. As soon as he realized the panic he had caused, he tore off his tall hat and white cotton beard. Then from the bags on his back he began to throw gifts right and left and to tell who he was.

"Reassured once more, everyone was soon laughing and chatting, munching the great 'red breads' (doughnuts), tasting their fruits or nibbling at the sweets from the familiar little bags. One man wondered which end up he was to hold the fork Santa Claus had given him. Another immediately tried on his new shirt. The girls arranged their bright-hued handkerchiefs into turbans, while others sought to find some place about their scanty clothing where they could stow away their bunch of bread, as well as the paper of needles and cake of soap given to each.

"It seemed as though everyone tried to talk louder than his neighbor as they examined the costume of Santa Claus, whom they now no longer feared. One man said that he thought it was John the Baptist; another that it was Elijah returned. Yet another thought it was Satan himself.

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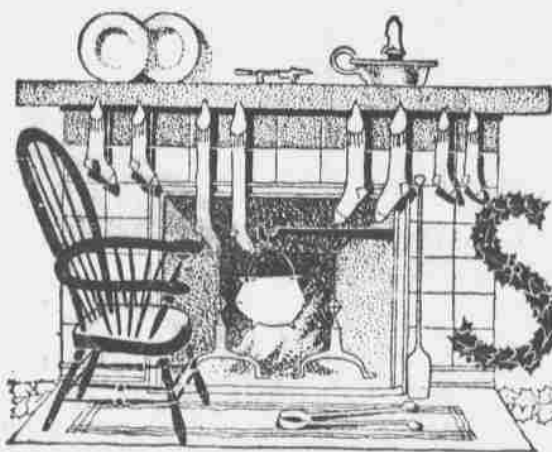
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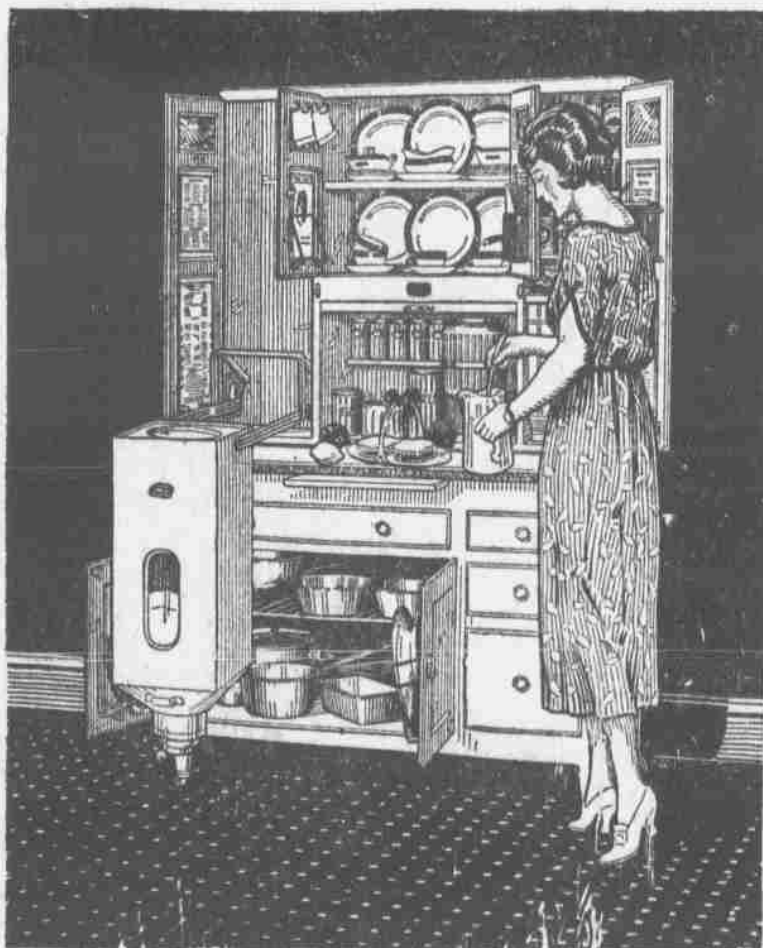


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